

TOMPKINS COUNTY WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL

June 16, 2025

Tompkins County Highway Facility, 170 Bostwick Rd, Ithaca

Final Minutes

Member		Seat	Member		Seat
Annie Bastoni	E	At-Large	Elaine Quaroni	P	Municipal Government
Shawn Bossard	P	Agriculture	Stephanie Redmond	A	At-Large
Cynthia Brock	E	Recreation	Steve Riddle	A	Water Purveyor
Liz Cameron	E	Co. Environmental Health	Graham Savio	E	Cooperative Extension
Amanda Champion	P	County Government	Becky Sims	P	Municipal Government
Brett Hayhurst	P	At-Large	Douglas Barnes	A	Associate
Kristen Hychka	E	Municipal Government	Roxy Johnston	P	Associate
Darby Kiley	P	County Planning & Sustain.	Patrick King	A	Associate
Liz Kreitinger	P	Watershed Organization	Lynn Leopold	E	Associate
Andrew Murphy	E	At-Large	Rebecca Minas	A	Associate
Jon Negley	P	Soil & Water Cons. District	Grascen Shidemantle	A	Associate
Eileen O'Connor	P	Environment	Tom Vawter	E	Associate
Holly Payne	E	At-Large	Linda Wagenet	A	Associate
Frank Proto	P	At-Large			

Guests: None

Call to Order/Agenda Review – First Vice Chair Frank Proto called the meeting to order at 4:20pm. There were no changes to the agenda.

Privilege of the Floor – None

Presentation: AEM and Beyond – *Devin Cox, Paul Gier, Megan Kirby Jon Negley, TCSWCD*

Staff from Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District presented on their agricultural conservation work, with the presentation and discussion covering multiple topics including the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program, conservation project success stories, new GIS planning tools, and farmer outreach strategies. They explained that the AEM program focuses on protecting and enhancing New York's agricultural landscape through voluntary, incentive-based, locally-led initiatives customized for each farm based on watershed needs while maintaining confidentiality and promoting teamwork. Staff presented a notable conservation success story involving a 200-acre field where crops had been planted right up to road ditch edges, which was converted to include a 130-foot-wide buffer strip using farmer-contributed sunflower seeds, creating a nutrient-capturing filter that remains in place years later. Also highlighted was the Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework, a new GIS tool using a free ArcGIS toolbox that analyzes geospatial data to identify conservation practice opportunities by generating runoff risk tables and suggesting locations for specific best management practices including bioreactors, contour buffer strips, and grass waterways. The tool is being tested on pilot watersheds with plans for county-wide expansion, though ground-truthing remains essential as it serves as an internal planning tool to inform farmer conversations. Staff described their "prospecting" outreach approach, which includes participation in agricultural organization meetings, hosting pasture walks and field demonstrations, leveraging referrals from existing cooperating farmers, and making direct cold calls to landowners, emphasizing their comfort with approaching farmers directly and building relationships across generations of farming families. The Eastern Finger Lakes Coalition's establishment is expected to streamline funding processes, providing dedicated annual allocations rather than requiring statewide competition for

funding each year.

Action: Approval of draft minutes

The draft May meeting minutes were approved with one minor edit.

Committee Reports

Education – Members are distributing boating maps along with US Army Corps hydrilla factsheets at Tompkins County sites. Committee continues to work on TMDL factsheet development.

Municipal Training– Committee did not meet this month. They are planning a fall site visit to locations where water-related projects are underway, potentially including SWCD sites.

Monitoring Partnership – Members continue to make progress on the TMDL implementation plan, discussing how modeling tools could support their efforts. The committee is working with the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization and building on existing models and activities rather than starting their planning efforts from scratch.

Chair and Staff Reports

Darby updated the group on the bylaws review process. Key proposed changes include elimination of unfilled ex-officio positions, increasing associate member terms from two to three years, and removing the Grants/Finance Committee while maintaining the current two vice-chair structure. The updated bylaws are expected to be voted on at the July meeting. Darby also noted that she put in a 2026 County budget request for food for municipal training workshops on behalf of the WRC.

Member Announcements

Members shared events, including Community Science Institute HABby Hour and Ithaca Reggae Fest, which features an education village with water-related organizations. Cayuga Lake Watershed Network will hold its annual community conference on June 25 in Canoga, with presentations covering topics such as harmful algal blooms, microbial source tracking studies, and more.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 5:26pm.